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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews current literature pertaining to the effects of divorce on children and makes suggestions regarding general ways in which parents and other adults may assist children in coping with divorce. The population of children towards which this study is directed includes preschool through latency age children. All inferences made in this study are based upon the body of literature examined in this paper. Chapter Two designates problems encountered by children whose parents are experiencing divorce. Both male and female children are discussed. In Chapter Three the author delineates adult intervention strategies designed to aid the child in coping with divorce-related changes. This information can be used by all those involved in the divorce experience including parents, educators, relatives, friends, and others. (Author/RH)

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THE IMPACT OF DIVORCE ON THE LIVES OF CHILDREN: ALLEVIATING THE TRAUMA OF THE DIVORCE EXPERIENCE THROUGH ADULT INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

by

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B.S., Southern Illinois University, 1972

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CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION: DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM

Divorce is a national trend that has no sign of diminishing (Wallerstein & Kelly 1976). In 1960 there were 393,000 divorces in the United States; by 1974, the figure was 970,000 (Streshinsky, 1976). Today in the United States divorce rates display a formidable increase with 5.0 divorces per 1,000 persons (Southern Illinoisan, 1977). Glick and Norton (1977) maintain that close to 40% of all marriages of young adults end in divorce.

Rita Turow (1977) asserts that one in three marriages now end in divorce, many with great trauma and unhappiness to all involved. Three of four divorces occur in marriages with children, ordinarily when children are young (Westman, 1972). More than 6 million children of divorced parents are presently living in the United States, and it is predicted that another 45% of all children born in 1977 will live as members of a one-parent family for at least several months during their lives (Glick & Norton 1977).

As the divorce rate escalates steadily, the children affected by divorce and its resulting family disruption become a primary concern. Stress brought about by such trauma has a serious impact on their lives. Wallerstein and Kelly (1975) contend that all children respond to family disruption with observable and significant behavior changes. These behavior changes are exhibited through a variety of

responses or reactions on the part of the child as illustrated in the following examples: sleep problems (restlessness, nightmares), regressions in toilet training, escalation in aggressive behavior (toward peers, parents, relatives, personal belongings), irritability, need for physical contact and numerous others.

Mavis Hetherington (1973) conducted a study with 72 adolescent girls, ages 13 years - 17 years, who were first-born daughters of lower- or lower-middle-class families. One third of these girls came from families in which the parents lived together, one third came from families in which the parents were divorced and children had minimal contact with the father, and one third came from families in which the father had died. After analyzation of the data from this study, Hetherington ascertained that early separation of parents leads to more diversified and pronounced effects on adolescent behavior than does separation after the age of five. This and other studies concerning children of divorce will be examined by the author in Chapter Two of the paper.

Wallerstein and Kelly (1977) contend that the first year following the physical separation of parents is a period of major disruption for most children. They indicate further that children may spend several years following the divorce in a state of disequilibrium characterized by the disarray of normal coping skills. The divorce event

is not the central factor in determining the outcome for the child. It is the divorce process itself (or the chain of events set in motion by the separation) that proves disruptive for the child (Wallerstein & Kelly 1976). The tenet that this disruption can be reversed or modified by appropriate interventions with children and their divorcing parents is expressed by Wallerstein and Kelly (1977).

Children are generally not responsible for the divorce experience, but they frequently harbor feelings of guilt and responsibility (Hozman & Froiland 1976). In a report in 1970 of impressions of divorce gained from the perspective of child psychiatrists working in a family court and in a child psychiatry clinic, Westman, Cline, Swift, and Kramer maintain that it is imperative that children be helped to understand the realistic reasons for their parents' divorce in order to minimize their tendency to infer inordinate responsibility on their part.

Louise Despert (1962) alleges that the legal event of divorce is much less damaging than the "emotional divorce"--that being, the divorce that exists in the hearts of one or both partners in a marriage even though legal divorce may never be considered. The unidentified situation of emotional divorce between parents is far more threatening to a child than the realistic situation of legal divorce. Despert (1962) states that within the family exist the forces which will affect the child.

Neubauer (1960) cautions, again within the family context, that the effect of the divorce experience will be influenced most significantly by the child's relationship with the remaining parent. Coddington is quoted as stating that "parental involvement is essential in the intervention procedure due to the fact that most major life events that effect children occur within the family context" (Holdahl & Casperson 1977).

McDermott (1970) asserts that intervention procedures are necessary to clarify: (1) the nature and quality of the child's tie to each parent; and (2) the immediate management issues of the child, including his understanding of and reaction to the divorce. In addition, interventions must frequently assess the degree to which the child is the unconscious focus of conflict between his parents--a conflict which is likely to intensify after the divorce and may even worsen the child's adjustment.

The purpose of this paper is two-fold. First, current literature pertaining to the effects of divorce on children will be reviewed. Secondly, the author will propose practical suggestions regarding general ways in which parents and other concerned adults may assist children in coping with the changes related to the divorce experience. The population of children towards which this study will be directed will include those in the age groups of preschool children through later latency age children.

In order to carry out the study it was assumed that: (1) the body of literature utilized in the study was complete enough to draw inferences concerning ways that interested individuals might assist children involved in the divorce experience; and (2) the writer had sufficient background and experience to draw such conclusions. It should also be noted that all inferences made in this study were based upon the body of literature examined in this paper.

Chapter Two will entail the designation of problems encountered by children whose parents are experiencing divorce. Both male and female children will be discussed. In Chapter Three the author will attempt to delineate significant information pertaining to adult intervention strategies utilized to aid the child whose parents are separated or divorced in coping with divorce-related changes. This information can be used by all those involved in the divorce experience including parents, educators, relatives, friends, etcetera.

CHAPTER TWO. A REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of Chapter Two is to review current literature relating to the effects of divorce on children. The majority of research of this type has come into existence only recently and is meager. Because of the limited material, both research and general popular literature have been examined and included in this discussion.

Wallerstein and Kelly Study

One of the most recent and comprehensive inquiries into the experience of children and adolescents whose parents are undergoing divorce is the "Children of Divorce Project" conducted by Joan Kelly and Judith Wallerstein in Marin County, California--a suburb of Northern California with one of the highest divorce rates in the world (Wallerstein & Kelly 1975). In 1972 the divorce rate in the United States was 4.0 per 1,000 population. California registered 5.4 divorces per 1,000 population in 1972 as compared to Marin County which showed 6.0 divorces per 1,000 population (Wallerstein & Kelly 1975).

Initiated in 1970, the "Children of Divorce Project" was designed to observe and record the impact of the divorce experience on all members of the family within the framework of a preventively oriented planning service for divorcing families (Wallerstein & Kelly 1975). To gather this

information family members were seen soon after the initial parental separation in four to six individual clinical interviews over a 6-week time span. In addition, all subjects in the study were invited to return for a follow-up evaluation approximately one year later. At the time of initial counseling and one year later, independent information was also obtained through the schools with parental consent.

Information procured in the study included: (1) the pre-divorce family history, including parent-child relationships; (2) family interaction at the time of parental separation, including sibling relationships; (3) parental descriptions of communications to the children regarding reasons for the divorce, caretaking, and visiting arrangements; (4) the child's initial and ensuing responses, as observed by parents, school, child, and therapist, including play and fantasy configurations; (5) the availability of support systems within extended family and community; and (6) the capacity of the parents to utilize intervention procedures adapted to the particular changes of their divorcing situation (Wallerstein & Kelly 1976).

The subjects employed in this study consisted of 131 children and adolescents, between the ages of two years and eighteen years of age, from 60 families residing in Marin County. Children utilized in this investigation were drawn from a normal population with no history of psychiatric or psychological problems (Wallerstein & Kelly 1976). All of the children were considered by their parents to be within

the normal and expectable range of development prior to the family disruption. Those children possessing a history of psychological difficulties were referred to related clinical services.

The 60 families interviewed in this study had been married an average of eleven years before filing for divorce, with a range of three to 23 years. The average family size was 2.2 children, with a span of one to seven children. The mean age of the fathers at the time of counseling was 37 years with the mothers' mean age being 34 years (Wallerstein & Kelly 1976).

Wallerstein and Kelly (1976) maintain that the central event of the divorce process for most children is the parental separation--an event that evokes or greatly intensifies the predominant initial responses of the child. The child differs from the adult for whom the central event of the divorce may vary widely. For the adult, the significant emotional event may be the discovery of infidelity, the difficult divorce decision itself, or the painful recognition of desertion.

The child frequently perceives the parent's departure as departure from <u>him</u>, personally (Wallerstein & Kelly 1976). The physical departure of the parent and his belongings, and the absence of the departed parent, make the family disruption unquestionably real for the child. This experience instigates a wide variety of responses on the

part of the child which may or may not be observable to the parent.

Youngest Preschool Children

The youngest children in the Wallerstein and Kelly (1976) study--ages 2½ - 3¼ years--all responded to the family disruption with observable and significant behavior changes. These behavior changes included acute regressions in toilet training despite a history of stabilized control, increased irritability, whining, crying, general fearfulness, acute separation anxieties (in regard to the remaining parent and separation in general), various sleep problems, increased masturbation activities, escalation in aggressive behavior, and tantrums. Increased possessiveness of toys and other belongings was exhibited by some of the children. Several children were preoccupied with maintaining "good behavior" for their parents. Regressive behavior was observed in all of these children and occurred most abruptly with children who had been given no explanation of the parent's departure--this being, in the majority of the families, the father (Wallerstein & Kelly 1975).

Wallerstein & Kelly (1975) state that these young children possess relatively few mechanisms for relieving their suffering. Observed during play, the children constructed unsafe toy worlds inhabited by hungry, assaultive animals. Recurrent playroom themes suggested an aimless

searching. Questions were asked uncomprehendingly and repetitiously of familiar objects such as "What's this? What's this? What goes with what?" (Wallerstein & Kelly 1975).

Evident in these children one year later, during the follow-up evaluation, was a general neediness in relationships. This effect was interpreted by interviewers through observation of the children's too-quick reaching out to strange adults for physical contact and by their wanting to sit on strange laps and cling to strange hands (Wallerstein & Kelly 1975). The regressions and escalated aggression, the fearfulness, possessive behavior, and the heightened questioning had disappeared by the time of the follow-up evaluation.

Middle Preschool Group

In contrast to the youngest group, the middle preschool group (aged $3\frac{1}{4}$ - $4\frac{3}{4}$ years) did not exhibit regressive behavior as the favored initial response to the parental separation (Wallerstein & Kelly 1975). Many of these children did display signs of irritability, whininess, and tearfulness, however. Aggressive behavior and fear of aggression increased with this age group.

Acutely bewildered by the loss of one parent, the children in the middle preschool group eagerly endeavored to understand the present and future changes in their relationships with both parents (Wallerstein & Kelly 1975). These children demonstrated a vacillating concept of the

dependability of human relationships and were frightened, confused, and sad. They expressed a despondent desire for a father: "We don't have a daddy anymore!" "I'll need a new daddy!" as well as fears of their own replaceability: "Will my daddy find a new little boy?" (Wallerstein & Kelly 1975)

Fantasy began to assume a more prominent role in the overall response in this group (Wallerstein & Kelly 1975). Self-blame or self-accusation was suffered by many of these children in response to the parent's departure and was reflected clearly in their play and their language. The need for physical contact, individual attention, and approval was also noted (Wallerstein & Kelly 1975).

Oldest Preschool Children

Analogous to the younger children, the oldest preschool group--ages $4\frac{3}{4}$ - 6 years--experienced heightened anxiety and aggression at the time of the parental separation as demonstrated by restlessness, increased whininess, moodiness, general irritability, separation problems (from remaining parent), and temper tantrums (Wallerstein & Kelly 1975). Unlike the younger children, this group appeared to possess a reasonable understanding of the divorce-related changes. Furthermore, Wallerstein and Kelly (1975) state that the response patterns of this older age group of children differed from the younger children. Many children in this group were able to voice their feelings concerning sadness,

their longings for their fathers, and their keen desire to restore the family unit. Newly created phobias and compulsive eating were experienced by several children (Wallerstein & Kelly 1975).

Schools independently reported novel behavior on the part of these children which consequently affected their academic and social learning. Included in these behaviors were high restlessness, distractibility, fear of failure, excessive daydreaming, moving away from reality, poor peer relations, clinging to teachers' bodies (particularly their legs), and a compulsive searching for empty laps (Wallerstein & Kelly 1975).

Despite shared common responses to the parental separation Wallerstein and Kelly (1976) note that the seven to ten year old children involved in this study revealed discernable differences in their particular abilities to cope with the divorce. For these reasons, the major initial responses to divorce of children in early latency and later latency were considered separately within the study and will be discussed as such in this paper.

Early Latency Children

The early latency group of children, defined as the seven and eight year olds by Wallerstein and Kelly (1976), demonstrated clearly distinguishable experiences as compared to the five and six year old children. Another significant area of concern within this age group, as stated by

Wallerstein and Kelly (1977), was their open suffering (revealed through intense sadness and grieving), their immobilization, and their vulnerability to regression in the period following the parents' separation and divorce. In a complicated stage developmentally, these children were capable of exercising denial as competently as the younger children and were unable to stabilize themselves, similar to the older children, through the utilization of diversified coping activities (Wallerstein & Kelly 1977).

The majority of the early latency children displayed intense alarm and fear concerning their present unstable family environment, as well as their future situations (Wallerstein & Kelly 1976). Crying and sobbing were observed frequently, particularly among the boys. Many of the children perceived the family dissolution as a threat to their whole existence (Wallerstein & Kelly 1976). Encompassed by the fear that there was no "safe place for them to take shelter", these children mirrored the tenet that the protective family unit was essential for their continued growth and safety.

Fantasies of deprivation invaded the lives of many children and were communicated either directly as feelings of loss or insatiable hunger or indirectly via reversal in play and fantasy (Wallerstein & Kelly 1976). From their research, Wallerstein and Kelly cite the example of Larry, a seven year old at the time of counseling, who related the convincing story concerning his mother's boyfriend who

deprived Larry of his breakfast each day after the mother had left for work. To compensate, Larry invented a nude male figure who fed him as much breakfast as he wanted. Accompanying this sense of deprivation felt by the children, Wallerstein and Kelly observed a need for many to fill a psychological emptiness (created by the family dissolution) through the utilization of fantasies such as elaborate and gratifying vacations and illusions of being an indulged only-child. This need to fill an emptiness was also evidenced in many children's involvement in receiving reality gifts such as new and better toys, clothes, bicycles, etcetera.

Feelings of responsibility toward the divorcing situation were not predominant in the responses elicited from children in the early latency group, although they did exist in a very small number of the children (Wallerstein & Kelly 1976). This is in contrast to the preschool children, who more frequently assumed they played a role in precipitating the divorce (Wallerstein & Kelly 1975). Desire for parental reconciliation among this age children, however, was widespread, overt, and continuing. The majority of these children intensely wished for the restoration of their intact family.

Immediate to the early latency group of children was the extreme sense of loss with regard to the departed father. Many felt abandoned and rejected and voiced a need for the presence of their father to provide discipline and external

controls (Wallerstein & Kelly 1976). This desire was expressed most often by eldest boys or male only-children.

In contrast to the feelings felt for the father, some children expressed considerable anger at their mother for either causing the divorce or driving their father away. More common than anger though, were the childrens' fears of antagonizing the custodial mother, compounded with fantasies of the powerful mother (Wallerstein & Kelly 1976). Because the mother was perceived by some of the children as "the victor who had driven out the father", these children experienced anxious concern about their own security.

Because children in this age group were of sufficient age to be utilized actively by one or both parents in the organization of angry confrontations, these children experienced a great deal of conflict in their feeling toward their divorcing parents (Wallerstein & Kelly 1976). Furthermore, divided loyalties toward parents existed within these children even though parents did not demand allegiance.

In terms of the early latency child's reaction to divorce as observed in the school environment, Wallerstein and Kelly (1976) note that there was no definitive relationship between the intensity of the child's suffering at home and observable reactions to the divorce as observed by the school. In some cases, the child's school behavior reflected similar behaviors observed elsewhere, while for other children, there was no specific consistency in their behavior in different settings (Wallerstein & Kelly 1976).

Later Latency Children

Because of their age and greater maturity children in the later latency age group, ages nine to ten years old as defined by Wallerstein and Kelly (1976), were more capable of recognizing their conflicts and were more motivated to deal with them (Wallerstein & Kelly 1977) than were the younger children in the study. They utilized various age-available ways of coping with their feelings such as denial, courage, bravado, self-motivated seeking of coherence, the pursuance of support from outside sources, conscious avoidance, and physical motion (Wallerstein & Kelly 1976). These psychological functionings were specific to this age group and were seen to be profoundly helpful in muting and encapsulating their suffering and making it tolerable enabling the child to progress developmentally.

The single feeling that most clearly differentiated the later latency aged children from all the younger children was their conscious intense anger (Wallerstein & Kelly 1976). The anger demonstrated by these older children was different from the aggression and irritability observed in the preschool child. Their anger was both well-organized and object-directed (Wallerstein & Kelly 1976). Many children were angry at the parent who they perceived as having initiated the divorce and many were angry at both parents. The intense anger of these children was voiced in various ways including temper tantrums, diffuse demandingness, scolding, and dictatorial attitudes.

Feelings of shame associated with the divorce experience appeared specifically in the later latency group of children. These children reported an acute sense of shame corresponding to the divorce and disruption in their family, to their parents and their behaviors and to the implied rejection of themselves by the father's departure depicting them, in their minds, as unlovable (Wallerstein & Kelly 1976).

Wallerstein and Kelly found that the suffering the children in this age group experienced often stimulated them into involvement in organized activity. This response was habitually engaged in because of the childrens' need to overcome their sense of powerlessness due to the divorce situation and to subdue the humiliation they experienced in relation to their rejection (Wallerstein & Kelly 1976). The kind of activity these children engaged themselves in was usually a combination of play and reality. One child, whose father was a successful advertising and public relations man, designed and issued a magazine complete with drawings, articles, and other events, that announced the prospective divorce of her parents (Wallerstein & Kelly 1976).

Unlike the preschool children and the early latency group, the children in this age group did not voice fears associated with actual starvation and rarely made references to hunger in response to the parental separation (Wallerstein & Kelly 1976). They did develop fears, though, affiliated with being forgotten or abandoned by both parents and expressed feelings of vulnerability concerning the insecurity

of having only one parent to rely on as opposed to the customary two parents (Wallerstein & Kelly 1976). Some children experienced realistic anxieties in regard to emotionally ill parents and possessed apprehensive sensitivities that their particular needs might be overlooked or forgotten.

Many children in this older latency group described feelings of loneliness and loss reflected in their realization that the focal connecting structures they had known were dissolving (Wallerstein & Kelly 1976). Intensified loyalty conflicts in these children often made it difficult for them to talk with one parent without worrying about betraying the other (Wallerstein & Kelly 1977).

Only a small number of children in this age group communicated concerns associated with responsibility for the divorce (Wallerstein & Kelly 1976). This is in contrast to responses made by the large majority of younger children in this study.

Many children in the later latency group experienced a sense of a shaken world in which the previous stable components had changed place or disappeared altogether (Wallerstein & Kelly 1976). For some children these changed features in their lives specifically corresponded to their sense of who they were and who they would become in the future (Wallerstein & Kelly 1976).

A variety of somatic symptoms were reported among children of this age group (Wallerstein & Kelly 1976). These

included symptoms such as headaches and stomach aches which habitually were associated with the parental conflict and parental visits.

Exactly comparable with the early latency children in this study, half of the children in the later latency group experienced a noticeable decline in school performance (Wallerstein & Kelly 1976). In addition, and in contrast to the younger latency children, these children suffered an accompanying deterioration in peer relationships during and following the parental separation.

Newly formed parent-child relationships emerged as a response to the parental separation in a significant number of children in the late latency age group. Characteristic of the parent-child relationship at this particular age is the interdependence of parent and child (Wallerstein & Kelly 1976). This interdependence has the potential of becoming heightened at the time of divorce which affords the child a prominent role in the reconstruction or diminuition of the parent's self-esteem. Many children in this age group formed a relationship with one parent following the separation that was specifically aimed at the exclusion or active rejection of the remaining parent (Wallerstein & Kelly 1976). In most cases, the rejection stemmed from emotional vengeance.

Increased emphatic responses to one or both parents and siblings was observed in several children as a distinct consequence of the parental separation and impending divorce

(Wallerstein & Kelly 1976). These children demonstrated a sensitive awareness of their parents' needs and responded with tenderness and care.

McDermott Study

McDermott (1970) conducted a three year study involving 1,487 children from both intact and divorced families. One hundred sixteen of these children came from families disrupted by divorce and had been referred for psychiatric evaluation at the University of Michigan's Children's Psychiatric Hospital. Legally intact families utilized in the study provided 1,349 children. The 22 children whose parents were separated but not divorced were not included in the investigation. The purpose of the study was two-fold. It attempted: (1) to statistically compare children from the divorce group with children from intact families with regard to certain common characteristics; and (2) to examine individual narrative records of the divorce group children to determine material directly relating to the divorce and its concomitant relation to the individual developmental history of the child. For the purpose of this paper, only material relating to the second half of this study will be discussed.

Because the material for this investigation was accumulated prior to the inception of the study, certain vital information was not available for analysis which presents definite limitations to the generalizability of the results

(McDermott, 1970). In addition McDermott states that the population used in the study limits the generalizability of results in regard to application to the typical group of children.

Depression in varying degrees was observed in these children. Occasionally the depression was overt, but in the majority of children it was hidden (McDermott, 1970). Evaluators in this study diagnosed hidden depression in these children through such activities as accident-prone behaviors with children being described as unconcerned with their own safety. Symptoms of fatigue and boredom were discerned as depressive behavior. Running away from home, a symptom seen frequently in these children, was explained as the child's effort to run away from depressive and hostile-aggressive feelings perceived in himself and in others (McDermott, 1970). Other explanations for running away were related to the child's attempt at reunion with the departed parent corresponding with the child's belief that running away would compel people to notice and look for him, lessening his fear of abandonment and temporarily reassuring him that he was still wanted (McDermott, 1970). Aggressive symptoms were also observed as signs of inward depression.

A common characteristic of these children, often voiced in psychological testing, was their feeling of being made small, weak, and vulnerable by the divorce experience (McDermott, 1970). These children felt unable to care for

themselves and felt themselves to be in danger of being physically injured by external forces.

In conjunction with the Wallerstein, Kelly studies, many children in the McDermott study readily assumed responsibility for the divorce situation.

Many children in the study displayed identification problems. Anna Freud (McDermott, 1970) states that the major cause for disruption in the child's development whose family has experienced a divorce is the remaining parent's tendency to place the child in the departed parent's role. This role was occasionally inflicted on these children by the remaining parent (usually the mother), siblings, grandparents, or other relatives. McDermott (1970) cites the typical observance of an unconscious tendency on the part of both the mother and children in the study to recreate the lost parent through the child's identification with the parent's traits. He maintains that this trait-identification by the child often appeared to provide the mother with a mechanism through which she could continue to suffer and punish the father through the child. McDermott continues that the boys in the study tended to resent having to fulfill the role of male in the family because of the vulnerable conditions associated with the role and because of their feelings of anger and helplessness related to the abandonment by the father.

McDermott (1970) cautiously concludes that the effects experienced by the child whose parents are divorcing will

normally be influenced by variables such as the developmental stage of the child at the time of the loss, the child's sex, and most significantly, by the child's relationship with the remaining parent.

Other Studies

Kay Tooley (1976) cites her research involving the diagnosis and treatment of children living in single parent families. This research evolved in the course of outpatient evaluation and treatment in the clinic in the Department of Psychiatry, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan. The most common evaluative format used in her research entailed interviewing both the parent and child separately in three to five clinical sessions. The therapeutic approach utilized in this study included: (1) an assessment of the reality pressures suffered by mother and child due to a suddenly fatherless family; and (2) a centralized effort to reduce their pressures, principally through counseling and support of the mother (Tooley, 1976).

Tooley cites theft of money, food-stealing, and food hoarding as emerging symptoms in many children seen in the clinic. These were attributed to feelings of deprivation experienced by the children due to the divorce situation.

Overt aggression and intrafamilial hostility showed a marked increase in both mother and children in the post-divorce stress period (Tooley, 1976). Many mothers expressed resentment at having to care for children with

decreased financial and emotional income. Children voiced expressions of anger toward both the father for leaving and the mother for "making him leave". Because the mother, in many cases, had divorced the father, many children exhibited concern in relation to the mother "divorcing" them also. In many cases the children placed themselves, usually with encouragement from the mother, in the departed parent's role. Loyalty conflicts, arising from the child's need to love both mother and father, were frequently observed in these children (Tooley, 1976).

In addition, Tooley acknowledges the existence of a habitual violent and assaultive behavior on the part of a large number of the younger children.

Hetherington (1973) initiated an investigation involving 72 adolescent girls who were first-born daughters of lower- or lower-middle-class families. Ages 13-17 years old, one third of these girls came from families in which the parents lived together, one third came from families in which the parents were divorced and had minimal contact with the father, and one third came from families in which the father had died. The study revealed that adolescent girls who had grown up without fathers repeatedly displayed inappropriate patterns of behavior relating to males. This is in contrast to the girls whose fathers had died. These girls exhibited severe sexual anxiety, shyness, and discomfort when near males.

In addition, the study maintained that girls whose fathers were absent because of divorce displayed tension

and inappropriately assertive, seductive, or promiscuous behavior in interactions with peers and adults. Hetherington states that it is the daughter's relationship with the father that is partially responsible for her acquisition of the social skills and confidence required for appropriate interactions with males. She also notes that if father absence is directly related to the daughter's lack of opportunity to gain emotional security and skills necessary for interaction with males, this deficiency would probably not become manifest until the age of puberty when heightened interaction between the sexes normally develops.

Further evidence from the study acknowledged the fact that the girls from divorced families harbored lower self-esteem than did the girls from intact families or families in which the father had died. Research in this study also indicated that early separation of parents leads to more numerous and pronounced effects on adolescent behavior than does separation after the age of five.

Crumley and Blumenthal (1973) conducted a clinical study predicated on data taken from psychiatric evaluations of approximately 200 children (ages 3-18 years) and parents in an Army child psychiatric clinic during the years 1969 and 1970. Special attention was given to the history of separation from the father during duty tours.

Early reactions of these children to the father's departure were analogous to those of other children at a comparable developmental level whose parent, particularly the

father, had died. These reactions included the following: (1) rageful protests regarding the desertion; (2) denial of loss and maintenance of a passionate fantasy relationship with the lost parent; (3) continual endeavors toward reunion and restitution; (4) emergence of irrational guilt and the desire for punishment; (5) intense separation anxieties and fears of abandonment; (6) separation of ambivalence toward the lost parent with redirection of hostility toward self or others; (7) a strong sense of narcissistic injury; (8) a decrease of ego control proceeding loss of ego and ego support; and (9) the precipitation of a wide spectrum of regressive symptoms.

Richard Gardner (1977), author of The Parent's Book About Divorce, is a practicing therapist in New Jersey where, for many years, he has worked with divorced parents and their children. In addition, he presently serves as Associate Clinical Professor of Child Psychiatry at Columbia University, College of Physicians and Surgeons.

Gardner states that denial is a primitive psychological mechanism by which a child unconsciously protects himself from mental pain. He continues that children whose parents are experiencing a divorce may react with denial to the separation in several common ways.

Some children will accept news of the impending separation with startling calmness which Gardner attributes to the child's failure to appreciate time lapses. The child

may actually require true experience to the situation before he can react to it.

Children in the divorce situation may create fantasies concerning the absent parent's return. Remarks such as "Mommy's living at Grandma's house" or "Daddy's on a business trip" are commonly heard from these children.

Gardner maintains that a child may displace his concerns over the parental separation, becoming completely immersed in the well-being of another person or pet. This "substitute" then receives the concern felt by the child over the well-being of the departed parent.

Some children's denial may correspond to the child's fear of and guilt involving his expression of anger. Gardner interprets this inhibition to be the result of parental attitudes toward the child's expression of hostile feelings. Other children tend to engage themselves in play activities and fantasy. These kinds of activities serve the function of restoring the absent parent, as in a small boy playing the role of the absent father in the game "house".

Gardner states that fantasies created by young children, age 2-4 years, in which they actually talk with or play with the departed parent are common. These fantasies are analogous to the "imaginary" friends children tend to possess in their younger years.

Denial of deficiencies in the departed parent is typically seen in these children and may result in idealization

of the absent parent by the child. Gardner relates this idealization to the child's denial concerning the parent's disinterest.

Gardner cites the occurrence of a "grief reaction" in the child as normal and healthy. He describes this grief reaction as a type of "desensitization" to the traumatic divorce situation, similar to that experienced by children whose parent has died. Gardner adds that withdrawal into fantasy during this period can serve as part of the grieving process that enables the child to work through his reactions to the separation.

Sadness, as explained by Gardner, may manifest itself in the child's diminished capacity for pleasure. Play themes related to the existence of sadness in a child may entail searching for a lost loved one, or the magical reappearance of someone who has disappeared. Withdrawal from peers and daydreaming are also common reactions noted by Gardner.

Sad emotions in many children may be heightened by their feelings of abandonment and rejection. Gardner found that tension associated with the fear of abandonment in these children typically emerged in the forms of generalized irritability, low frustration tolerance, difficulty in falling asleep, concentration problems in school, and tics (particularly in the facial area). He also states difficulty in concentrating on television as a significant indicator of tension in a child.

In association with the fear of abandonment, many children become sensitive to the reality of their replaceability. Gardner maintains that some children express fears that the departed parent will find a substitute for them elsewhere. He adds that many children respond to their fear of abandonment by a fierce need for affection, often turning to strangers to fill that need.

Children who feel rejected or afraid of being abandoned may become overly dependent upon or cling excessively to the custodial parent. Gardner asserts that separation anxieties may develop as the child may refuse to visit friends or attend school.

Other children may try to lessen their feelings of abandonment by provoking punishment from one or both parents. As interpreted by Gardner, these children are willing to suffer the pain that such punishment entails in order to reassure them that the parent is still very much there. Gardner stresses that if these children encounter the living experience that their fears are unwarranted; satisfying relationships with both parents are maintained; and the availability of both parents is continued, their abandonment fears generally will decrease.

Gardner defined depression as "a deep and painful state of sorrow" which may conceptualize as a result of parental separation and departure. He states these characteristics typically existing in varying degrees in children whose parents are involved in a divorce: loss of

appetite; diminished interest in and concentration on studies; general apathy; loss of enjoyment from play and peer relationships; helplessness; hopelessness; irritability; obsessive self-criticism; withdrawal; loneliness; despair; feelings of vulnerability; extreme boredom; inability to complete projects and assignments; low frustration tolerance; and inability to utilize work and play to integrate reactions to parental separation. In more severe cases, children may become preoccupied with self-destructive fantasies, become accident-prone and unconcerned for their personal safety, and may exhibit suicidal gestures and, occasionally, attempts.

Gardner quotes running away from home as an occasional reaction to the parental separation. This act, Gardner maintains, has the potential of lessening abandonment and rejection fears by allowing the child to be the rejector rather than the rejected. In addition, it may serve the purpose of attracting the separated parent's attention and involvement.

It is customary, Gardner states, for the child in the divorce situation to regress to earlier developmental levels in the hope of regaining gratifications enjoyed previously. The reverse may also occur. The child may remain fixed, not advancing beyond his present level of development in order to avoid taking on the newer demands attendant to higher levels of maturation. Regressive manifestations may include thumb-sucking, baby talk, infantile and demanding

behavior, requests for bottle feeding, bed-wetting, soiling of pants, feigning of illness, rocking or the resumption of the need for a security blanket, sleep problems, and increase in masturbation activities.

Some children, in response to the parental separation, assume adult mannerisms, speech intonations, and affectations. This caricature of adults, called hypermaturity, may manifest itself in the forms of scolding, reprimanding, disciplining, and lecturing of younger children.

Self-blame and the corresponding feelings of guilt are habitually seen in children of divorce. Associated with the ideas of wrongdoing that are central to guilt feelings is the impression of worthlessness exhibited in many children with concomitant anticipations of punishment.

Gardner contends that the large majority of children with separated or divorced parents experience loyalty conflicts. Occasionally when separation occurs, children find themselves in a situation where their loyalty is openly tested, where they are required to make decisions and take actions that unquestionably reveal their preferences.

Many children in the divorce situation become preoccupied with thoughts of reconciliation with regard to the separated parents. Gardner notes the reconciliation preoccupations can take many forms such as threats, bribery, utilization of money as a manipulative tool, application of depressive symptoms, and suicide gestures.

Gardner states that the one-parent household may deprive the child of psychological benefits generally acquired in the two-parent household. He maintains that the boy's relationship with his mother and the girl's relationship with her father typically serve as models for their future relationships. He adds that the same-sexed parent also serves as a prominent model for the child's personal sex role. In association with these factors, many children of divorced families experience sexual identification problems connected with the parental separation.

Separation, as Gardner explains, inevitably produces feelings of insecurity in children. He continues that the child's realizations concerning the fragility of home stability and the temporary state of relationships tends to make him feel small, vulnerable, and insecure. These feelings of insecurity, lack of protection, and helplessness all lend toward the lowering of a child's self-esteem. Gardner maintains that young children judge their personal self-worth via their parents' views of them. Characteristically, when a parent departs, the child associates this act with the termination of love. This may indicate to the child that he is unlovable which in turn has the potential of lowering his self-esteem considerably.

In his book, What Every Child Would Like Parents to Know About Divorce (1978), Dr. Lee Salk writes of the impact of divorce on children. Dr. Salk is a child psychologist and currently serves as a Clinical Professor of

Psychology in Pediatrics and Psychiatry at Cornell University Medical College.

Speaking as both a therapist and divorced parent with custody of his two children, Dr. Salk cites the following reactions the children in his experience have displayed to the divorce situation: (1) responsibility for the separation and accompanying guilt; (2) non-expressal of feelings so as to protect the parents from additional burden; (3) maintenance of extreme "good behavior" in hopes of delaying or rescinding the divorce altogether; (4) aggression, destructiveness, and vandalism; (5) difficulty concentrating in school; (6) daydreaming; (7) muscle weakness or physical exhaustion; (8) lack of appetite, complaints of stomachaches, sad facial expressions; and (9) fear of abandonment.

Rita Turow (1977), a public educator with experience in counseling, reiterates many of Dr. Salk's findings in her book Daddy Doesn't Live Here Anymore. To accumulate data for her research Turow conducted a coast-to-coast survery of divorced parents. In addition, a large number of personal interviews were administered with the assistance of many noted personalities in fields relating to divorce. Feelings of insecurity concerning care-taking and living arrangements; responsibility for the divorce; anxiety in relation to the parental termination of love for the child; confusion; and fear of the loss of availability regarding the departed parent were all common themes specific to the children in Turow's investigation.

Louise Despert (1962) in her book, Children of Divorce, states that young children may experience intense insecurity in relation to their being loved. They may also instigate campaigns bent on finding a replacement for the departed parent.

Despert maintains that adolescent children may suffer hostile feelings directed toward the custodial parent. In addition the adolescent child may possess heightened sensitive emotions due to the novel one-parent home environment. These feelings may reflect ideas inflicted on him by friends and may cause the child's withdrawal from peer relationships and activities.

Chapter Two of this paper has presented a review of current literature pertaining to the divorce experience and its resulting impact on children. Material derived from experimental studies, articles, and books has been examined in this chapter.

Chapter Three will propose suggestions regarding general ways in which parents and other concerned individuals may assist with the problems children of divorce tend to encounter in the reorganization of their lives. Ten areas of importance for the divorced child will be discussed with concomitant recommendations advocated by professionals in the field of divorce and children. These areas are as follows: (1) emotional divorce versus legal divorce; (2) explaining divorce to the child; (3) reassurance of security for the child; (4) reassurance of parental love,

support, and need of the child; (5) parental encouragement of the child to express opinions and talk freely; (6) reassurance of the normality of the child's feelings; (7) provision of substitute relationships for the child; (8) parental encouragement of the child's development of competence; (9) informing the child's teacher; and (10) seeking supportive intervention.

CHAPTER THREE. SUGGESTED ADULT INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

The purpose of this paper is to investigate literature related to the divorce situation and its potential impact on the children involved. Chapter One presented information regarding the steady escalation of divorce rates and its significance to children. Chapter Two discussed recent studies pertaining to the divorce experience and its resulting effects on children. Chapter Three will propose suggestions regarding general ways in which parents, specifically, and other concerned adults may assist with the problems children of divorce tend to encounter in the restructuring of their lives.

The reader must be cautioned that specific advice cannot be quoted for a given child's situation. All children are individually different, and children's reactions to the divorce experience vary widely due to variables such as the child's age, sex, the child's developmental stage at the time of divorce and the child's relationships within the family. However, several common and basic understandings do exist which play a significant role in coming to terms with divorce-related changes.

It seems relevant at this point to express the author's tenet that the problems discussed in this paper are not solely characteristic of children whose families are experiencing a divorce. Children from intact homes (having both parents present) are often curious and anxious regarding

many similar areas of concern pertinent to children of divorce. Stanley Cath (1969) states that children living in homes with both parents present are similar to children from divorced families in relation to security anxieties. Caretaking arrangements, for example, should something happen to either parent are of special interest to many children. Because any of these problem areas may be experienced by children from intact families, similar recommendations to those stated in this chapter are suggested for all children.

The discussion presented in this chapter will be approached through the utilization of ten distinct categories. They are as follows: (1) emotional divorce versus legal divorce; (2) explaining the divorce to the child; (3) reassurance of security for the child; (4) reassurance of parental love, support, and need of the child; (5) parental encouragement of the child to express opinions and talk freely; (6) reassurance of the normality of the child's feelings; (7) provision of substitute relationships for the child; (8) parental encouragement of the child's development of competence; (9) informing the child's teacher; and (10) seeking supportive intervention. The author will discuss general suggestions relating to these areas and advocated by experienced professionals in the field of divorce and its effects on children.

Emotional Divorce Versus Legal Divorce

Many parents experience guilt-related feelings toward the divorce experience and the resulting situation forced

upon their child. Parents consider the possibility of permanent scars inflicted upon their child as a consequence of the divorce and, in many cases, debate staying together "for the sake of the children".

Louise Despert (1962) differentiates between emotional and legal divorce. She states that children find family situations marked with quarreling, tension and strain (emotional divorce) more difficult to understand and cope with than a family life that entails the loss or departure of one of the parents (legal divorce). Wallerstein and Kelly (1976) maintain that the divorce event is not the central factor in determining the outcome for the child, but rather, the divorce process or chain of events set in motion by the divorce. Grollman (1969) contends that it is the conflict of the divorce, not the divorce itself, that has an impact on children.

The majority of people that work with children express the belief that a home in which a divorce has occurred can be healthier than one in which a bad marriage continues to exist (Sinberg, 1978). In the face of divorce, then, it is the parents' responsibility to help their children face the reality of the divorce situation without loss of security (Grollman, 1969). Westman, Cline, Swift, and Kramer (1970) assert that it is imperative that children be helped to understand the realistic reasons for their parents' divorce in order to minimize their tendency to infer inordinate responsibility on their part. In an attempt to assist

children in understanding the divorce experience, the parent should respond to the child's questions with the most appropriate factual answers. Grollman (1969) states that the divorcing parent's task is not to hide unpleasant truths from the child but rather, to step by step, assist the child in facing authentic events with knowledge rather than fanciful imagination.

Explaining Divorce to the Child

Fundamental to the child's understanding and acceptance of the divorce experience is the parents' explanation of the reasons for the separation. Louise Ames (1969) explains that nothing is more disturbing to a child than a change he does not understand. She continues that one of the most important cautions to the divorcing parent is his or her (both parents, if possible) responsibility to make perfectly clear to the children involved the reasons for the divorce, the fact that the child is in no way responsible for the parental decision to separate, and the exact implications of the divorce for the child in terms of actual, practical living.

To clarify the situation for the parents who are considering a divorce, Evelyn Pitcher (1969) suggests that parents explain first to themselves the reasons for the divorce and the concomitant complexities of the situation in all its aspects. In doing this, the parents may be forced to discover in advance the factors that contribute to their child's psychological well being.

When telling children about the divorce decision the parent should, very simply, tell the truth. A detailed or lengthy explanation is not necessary as it may overburden the child with information beyond his ability to comprehend (Turow, 1977). Simple explanations are more easily understood by a child and are less threatening.

Parents should assure their child that he is not the cause of the divorce and that both parents will always love him and continue to take care of his needs. The child will need to be told where he will stay after the separation and with whom he will live. This message may be revised according to the needs and circumstances in individual families. For example, the parent might say,

> "A long time ago Daddy and I (Mother and I) loved each other very much and we decided to get married. But after we lived together for a long time both of us began to change. We've changed so much that we're not happy living together anymore. We get mad and we yell at each other and sometimes at you. Sometimes we get so mad we won't even talk to each other and sometimes we cry. This makes us very sad and we think it makes you sad too. When a Mommy and Daddy are so unhappy living together, they get a divorce. Divorce means Mommy and Daddy won't live together anymore. Divorce is a grown-up problem and it's not your fault. Nothing you did caused the divorce. Even though Daddy and I won't be living

together, we will both always love you and take care of you. You will stay with Mommy in our house and Daddy is going to move to an apartment. You can see him whenever you want and talk to him on the phone. He'll be there whenever you want to see him."

For the young child the consequences of the divorce experience are complex and extraordinarily difficult to understand and integrate (Wallerstein & Kelly 1977). Therefore, when dealing with young children the divorce message must be repeated, reiterated, and communicated in many ways and at many times. The young child's tendency to ask repetitious questions concerning the divorce situation is his way of understanding, accepting, coping with, and working through an anxiety situation (Grollman, 1969).

In families consisting of more than one child, Pitcher (1969) advises that parents deal with each child separately in communicating the divorce decision. She contends that the age and personality of the children involved may call for a different explanatory approach. Other professionals suggest that parents inform all members of the family simultaneously in order to minimize the possibility of providing information to one child that was unintentionally forgotten when talking with another. It is up to the adults involved to make this decision based on the personal insights they possess concerning the children.

Mindey (1969) asserts that the child involved in the divorce experience will be able to accept the situation only as well as the parent does. She continues that the manner in which the marriage problems and divorce situation are handled is important to the child's development. Parents would not want their child to reach adulthood believing that life is hopeless and frustrating, that human beings were meant to suffer, that happiness is impossible to achieve, or that either parent is evil. It is the parents' responsibility to teach the child through words and actions that difficulties can be overcome, goals can be reached, that it is possible to fail in a love relationship and marriage and learn from that mistake, and that the child can enjoy a good, happy life even though his parents are divorced.

Reassurance of Security for the Child

Janet Sinberg (1978) maintains that the child of divorce needs to feel safe. She states that the divorced child may become very anxious over the smallest change in his life. Because the child is having to deal with a major change--the divorce--smaller things may be very upsetting for him. The child in this situation requires the parents' constant reassurance concerning the child's safety and security. Parental reassurance should be voiced and demonstrated many times to the child and in many ways.

The divorcing parent may encounter a complicated task in attempting to maintain discipline with his/her child.

Because both parent and child are involved in an emotionally trying situation, a balanced routine of discipline may be difficult to attain. Carol Mindey (1969) explains that the divorced parent may feel tired, ineffectual, or discouraged at times and may vacillate from one extreme of discipline to another. Sinberg (1978) states that it is the parent's responsibility to set and maintain limits for the child. Because of the child's age and experience, it is generally beyond his developmental reach to have mastered the art of self-control.

Sinberg (1978) asserts that divorcing parents must allow their children to continue their lifestyle in a child's role. Burdensome responsibility that places the child in the departed parent's role ("Now you're the man of the house" or "You're Daddy's little woman now") may endanger the child's sense of security and tends to increase the child's anxiety concerning the recent changes in his life. It is the parents' responsibility to assure the child that adults are in charge of his world and will continue to be so.

Gardner (1977) contends that it is the child's ability to feel secure in the knowledge that he will always be cared for that is the crucial component in the divorce process. Children of divorce often associate the divorce experience with fears of abandonment. Children tend to generalize from their experiences in the home and may begin to question the remaining parent's stability in terms of remaining in or leaving the home. Gardner instructs that children must be

helped to appreciate the fact that they still have two parents who both love the child, and that if anything should happen to the custodial parent the child can live with the non-custodial parent. In addition, Gardner maintains that parents should discuss with their children exactly which friends and relatives would be available tc take care of them in the event that either parent could not.

Reassurance of Parental Love, Support, and Need of the Child

Crucial to a child's development of self-respect is the genuine feeling that he is needed by one or two people. Children of divorce typically question the need their parents have for them (Gardner, 1977). A child's sensing that he is an increased burden to his parents may diminish his feelings of being needed and useful. Gardner advises that parents communicate to their children the parents' need for them and the child's usefulness and pleasure-giving abilities to the parent. As the situation is actualized for the child and he experiences the parents' joy with him and interest in the child's activities, the child will gain the opportunity to experience the parents' love and support.

Children may display various forms of infantile behavior while experiencing divorce (Sinberg, 1978). In times of stress or illness children often regress for a period of time as a means of backing away from something painful. The child in this situation is in need of parental support

and understanding rather than punishment for babyish behavior (Sinberg, 1978).

Divorcing parents should provide constant reassurance of parental love for their child. Many children of divorce believe that because their parents ceased to love each other, they may cease to love the child. Parents should assure their children that this situation would never occur. Janet Sinberg (1978) suggests that the parent might explain to the child that a parent's love is a special kind of love that never changes.

Many parents become overindulgent with their children due to guilt-related feelings concerning the divorce. Pitcher (1969) contends that the act of overindulgence on the parents' part tends to "obliterate the child's desire to bend his efforts toward achievement and deprives the child of the attainment of satisfaction in his own endeavors". Love, understanding and support are more efficient and worthwhile for the divorced child than new dolls or blocks (Sinberg, 1978).

In addition, parental interest in the child's activities is more rewarding assurance for the child of a parent's interest and involvement. Whenever possible, parents should plan to attend the child's "open house" at school or special concerts or plays. Baseball games, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, etcetera provide ample opportunities for the parent to display an interest in the child's affairs. Emotional support

is significantly more meaningful and beneficial to the child than material possessions.

Carol Mindey (1969) directs the following advice toward the non-custodial parent in the divorce experience--"Don't divorce your child". She asserts that the parent-child relationship may be modified by the divorce, but it is not dissolved. Children accustomed to two parents have learned to depend on these adults in their lives to supply their needs, and this relationship should be continued.

Parental Encouragement of the Child to Express Opinions and Talk Freely

Each of us, whether child or adult, lives in a different perceptual world; we see and construct our pictures of the universe in terms of our own needs and emotional experiences (Grollman, 1969). Turow (1977) states that parents must be careful to realize that each child will have his own unique way of viewing, and framing his view of, the divorce picture. One of the most rewarding and beneficial abilities a divorced parent (or any parent) can possess is the ability to listen to his/her child. Parents caught in the emotional trauma of divorce should take great care to speak with their children not to them (Grollman, 1969).

Grollman explains that parents should involve themselves in a deliberate attempt to listen intently to their children in order to determine the nature of the child's real concerns. He continues that parents should encourage

the child's "right to feel" and assist children in discovering their real emotions and reactions to the divorce experience--taking care never to brand the child's thoughts as "insignificant" or "babyish". This task can be accomplished through parental encouragement of the child's opinions and emotions. The child should not be forced to share his feelings, but it is the parent's responsibility to the child to create an atmosphere in the home in which the child feels comfortable to speak freely without fear of ridicule or punishment.

Reassurance of the Normality of the Child's Feelings

In regard to the anger that most children experience toward the divorce situation, it is the adult's responsibility to aid the child in becoming comfortable with his angry reactions and resentful feelings. Care should be taken to relieve the child of any guilt felt on his part because of these reactions and feelings. Gardner (1977) counsels that children should be helped to recognize and be reassured of the fact that angry thoughts and feelings are inevitable reactions to frustrations which all people experience. He suggests that parents inform their children that they themselves have experienced similar feelings and emotional reactions in the past and continue to do so in the present. Gardner continues that children should be encouraged to express their resentments at the earliest possible stage to insure that their anger does not become

suppressed, repressed, and built up internally. It is essential that children become sensitive to angry thoughts as they arise and become aware of the concomitant physical sensations experienced with anger. Encouragement should be provided so that children will assert themselves in expressing their resentments. The ability to freely voice personal feelings furnishes the child with a method of altering a situation that is causing resentments.

Gardner states the significance of assisting children in differentiating between angry thoughts, angry feelings, and angry deeds. He emphasizes impressing upon the child the fact that one has little control over the appearance of angry thoughts and feelings; whereas angry acts or deeds are very much under our control. Reiterating that most people possess similar thoughts and behaviors tends to assist children in realizing less guilt concerning their own reactions as they come to understand that they are not different from others in regard to their angry thoughts and feelings.

Gardner (1977) acknowledges the existence of many factors operating in the development of guilt in the child experiencing the divorce situation but states the child's need to "control the uncontrollable" as the most significant and frequent factor displayed by the children in his counseling. He explains that in order for the child to gain a sense of control in a situation that is seemingly out of hand with changes occurring one after the other, the

child may take personal responsibility for the divorce. Gardner believes that in the child's statement "The divorce is my fault" is the expression of the child's concept of controlling the uncontrollable. If the child can convince himself that he was the cause of the divorce--that something the child did or some way the child acted brought about the decision for parental separation--then, hopefully, the child can act in some way to bring about a reversal of the divorce decision (Gardner, 1977). By doing this the child gains control of an uncontrollable situation.

Gardner continues that children in this situation must be helped to understand that there are certain things in life that an individual can control and others that an individual cannot control. Parents can assist their children by involving them in the selection and discrimination of things people can control and things they cannot. For example, an individual can control whether he throws a ball, does his homework, eats a piece of pie, etcetera. An individual cannot control things such as rain, snow, lightning, and parental divorce. Gardner adds that children should also be aided in recognizing that there are certain things they can do that will help in lessening the pain of the parental separation such as involving themselves in meaningful relationships with both peers and adults. Wallerstein and Kelly (1976) submit that children in their study, in an attempt to overcome the feeling of powerlessness they experienced due to the divorce situation, involved themselves in

organized activities. The kind of activity these children engaged themselves in was usually a combination of play and reality. Organized activities such as sports, clubs, organizations, etcetera, might be suggested for the child in this situation and may serve the function of supplying the child with a sense of control in his personal life. Gardner (1977) maintains that parents may do well to enjoy similar activities such as "Parents Without Partners" to gain that same sense of control over some area in their lives.

Loyalty conflicts in relation to the separated parents are experienced by a large majority of children with separated or divorced parents. In addition, many children suffer guilt-related loyalty conflicts concerning their enjoyment of the time spent with the non-custodial parent on visiting days as compared to the time spent with the custodial parent in the home. Gardner (1977) advises that these children should be helped to appreciate the fact that time spent with the non-custodial parent on visiting days may be more enjoyable due to the limited restrictions placed on the child in the departed parent's home. In addition, Gardner explains that reassurances of the normality of these reactions and preferences should be provided these children.

Many children experience embarrassment and shame associated with the divorce situation. The child in this predicament should be encouraged to talk about his feelings. The parent might explain to the child that he is not alone in his situation--other children who have lost one or both

parents for whatever reason could be mentioned and talked about to help the child realize that other children have experienced and survived this kind of ordeal.

Provision of Substitute Relationships for the Child

To support children involved with thoughts of their parents' remarriage Gardner (1977) suggests that parents supply their child with other adults and peers with whom to interact. The parent should consider the types of activities in the community that will provide the child with supplementary peer and adult relationships (Mindey, 1969). Sports, scouting activities, church clubs, and summer camps give the child the opportunity to come into regular contact with others outside the family. These involvements on the part of the child may also provide partial compensation for the child's loneliness and deprivations related to the parental separation.

Parental Encouragement of the Child's Development of Competence

Oates (1969) states that the child of divorce often has the need to compensate for his frustrations and deprivations by excelling in areas where he is competent. He continues that several socially acceptable compensatory devices commonly utilized by children include excelling in school work, athletics, drama, making money, and independent actions.

To increase a child's sense of self-worth, Gardner (1977) suggests that parents focus their energies toward

helping their child gain competence in important areas of living, enabling the child to handle himself more effectively in the course of daily activities. So that children may gain the self-confidence and ego-enhancing pleasures that are concomitant with successful involvements with others, Gardner maintains that parents must help their children in the acquisition of techniques that aid in relating satisfactorily and gratifyingly to others. Parents themselves can provide a model to achieve this goal through their relationships with each other (especially during and after the separation), their relationships with friends, relatives, etcetera, and through the relationship they maintain with their own children. Being aware of the significance for the child of knowledge of and exposure to techniques in successfully relating to others, parents can also seek appropriate models elsewhere so that children may experience involvement with those outside the family circle. The "Big Brother" and "Big Sister" organizations may be one such structure worth investigation. Educators, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, etcetera, may also provide suitable learning experiences for the child.

In addition, Gardner contends that it is necessary that the child's accomplishments be acknowledged by parents and other interested individuals. He maintains that it is difficult for any individual to enjoy competence in a vacuum. The child who, while riding his bicycle, yells "Look Mom, no hands!" is experiencing the enhanced sense of self-worth

that comes from his accomplishment and gains additional ego-enhancement from the mother's admiration.

Informing the Child's Teacher

Another significant area of concern for parents and children involved in the divorce experience is the divulgence of the parental separation to the child's teacher. Many parents argue against the teacher's being informed about the parental separation for fear that it may add to the child's difficulties. Some parents voice apprehension in relation to their anticipations that their child may be treated differently by the teacher because of the child's "special" situation or that the child may be made a "privileged character" by the teacher's utilization of special attention and indulgences resulting possibly in ridicule and alienation by classmates (Gardner, 1977). Other parents express fears that their child's teacher may display prejudice against the child due to the parents' divorce (Gardner, 1977). While these reactions by a teacher may certainly occur, Gardner (1977) states his tenet that this situation is rare and does not warrant the child's being deprived of the benefits that may be provided by the teacher's knowledge of the separation.

Some parents hold the belief that the teacher should not be informed of the parental separation unless the child's reactions to the separation draw attention to him in the classroom or disrupt his work there. Predicated on

research investigated for this study it is diffucult for this researcher to imagine a child's not reacting to parental separation. Gardner (1977) maintains that waiting to inform the teacher until the child exhibits symptoms may deprive the child of valuable early intervention--intervention that Gardner believes might reduce and even prevent the development of more serious reactions. Because of the large amount of time spent with the child, the teacher is in an advantageous position to provide support, reassurance, advice, etcetera, and can serve as a substitute for the departed parent. Furthermore, Gardner contends that the teacher's ability to involve the child in classroom activities--particularly those that are pleasurable and esteem-building for the child--can serve as an antidote for the child's suffering.

Because certain behaviors may be exhibited by the child in the divorce situation (as evidenced in research examined in this study), the teacher's knowledge of parental separation will enable him/her to react appropriately to a child's atypical behavior. It is this writer's contention that withholding information concerning parental separation from the child's teacher deprives the child of significant support. In addition, the parent's depriving the teacher of the most accurate information available regarding the separation places the teacher in the vulnerable position of not being able to assist the child to the best of his/her ability due to the lack of knowledge concerning the child's situation.

Seeking Supportive Intervention

Divorce in itself does not warrant a child's being in therapy (Gardner, 1977). However, Wallerstein and Kelly (1977) state that divorce does carry the potential for disrupting the flow of a child's developmental process. Through the use of appropriate interventions with children and their parents, this disruption can be reversed or modified.

It is this writer's contention that the divorce experience contains the qualities necessary for the development of a critical period in the involved child's life. The development or non-development of a critical period is contingent upon many factors such as the child's age, sex, developmental stage at the time of the separation, relationship with family members, etcetera. Aware of these factors, the writer cautions parents not to be hesitant should their child appear to need professional assistance to help them through a "rough" period.

Gardner (1977) states that a parent concerned about a child's well-being may do well to inquire into the child's school performance. An extreme deterioration in academic performance and/or classroom behavior may serve as an indicator of the child's inability to adjust to the changes occurring in his life and may be a signal of the child's need for professional help.

In addition, a sharp decline in peer relationships may indicate the necessity for professional assistance

for a child (Gardner, 1977). Gardner (1977) explains that normally a child will fight fiercely with younger siblings using them as a scapegoat for pent-up hostilities, etcetera. Peers, though, will usually not accept such conduct and will generally reject or alienate the opposing child. Gardner cites the child's willingness to seek peers and to be sought by peers as a sometimes significant indicator of a child's need for professional counseling.

It is imperative to state at this point that only the parent or substitute adult is qualified to make the decision of seeking supportive intervention outside the family. The parent is best aware of the individual child's needs and ability to cope with divorce-related changes. The concerned parent or adult can maintain an alert eye and ear to determine areas in which the child needs help.

Clubs and organizations are helpful in locating capable therapists that deal with children. "Parents Without Partners" may provide listings of such professionals or personal recommendations may be furnished by other divorced or separated individuals. Physicians, the clergy, educational institutions, etcetera, may all be helpful in providing qualified therapists for children whose families are experiencing a divorce.

It is not the intent of the author to infer that every child will experience any or all of the problems discussed in this paper. Evidence suggests though that children whose

families are involved in divorce generally react in ways directly related to the divorce situation. It is the author's wish that the divorced child's situation might have been clarified through research presented in this paper and that it might be useful for any individual involved with a child experiencing divorce.

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